

the ACTION reporter

American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods

Volume III, No. 5

March-April, 1959

May Meeting Probes Urban Growth, Decay



PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS at the ACTION conference on The American City will be, from Left to Right: Ralph Lazarus, president of Federated Department

Stores; New Jersey's Governor Robert B. Meyner; Dr. Raymond J. Sautnier, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, and the Hon. Adlai E. Stevenson.

The American city will be scrutinized as never before between May 4th and 6th in a meeting which is designed to bring about a break-through in America's problems of urban decay and growth.

ACTION and the Newark Economic Development Committee are joining forces to sponsor the three-day national meeting in Newark, New Jersey, which will bring together 500 outstanding leaders in business, labor, government and urban affairs.

Three years of ACTION research studies into Housing and Community Development will be behind the content of the meeting. State and national figures will look at our cities and analyze policy and program issues from the angle of the community, state, the nation, the businessman and private action.

Speakers at the opening reception and dinner Monday evening, May 4, will be Governor Robert B. Meyner of New Jersey, who will see the American City from the vantage point of the state government, and Dr. Raymond J. Sautnier, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, Washington, D.C., who will study the city as both a component and product of national economy.

The general session on Tuesday morning will feature "An Agenda for the American City," with ACTION president James W. Hesse presenting a set of goals for our cities to be attained by private and public actions. ACTION vice chairman Fred Kramer and Martin Meyerson, vice president for research, will present policy issues for the American city, called from ACTION's three-year research study.

These policy issues will be thoroughly discussed by conference participants in the afternoon and the final policy evolved will eventually be issued as a guide for local communities.

Tuesday's luncheon speaker will be Ralph Lazarus, president of Federated Department Stores and a trustee of the Committee for Economic Development.

The Hon. Adlai E. Stevenson, former Governor of Illinois, will be the principal speaker at the Tuesday evening banquet.

(Continued on page 2)

Businessmen Are Challenged To Work For Rebirth of Cities

A two-weeks Corporate Executives Seminar on the American City will be conducted by ACTION May 4-15 with a two-pronged purpose:

- To provide American business leaders with the most useful, tested information and know-how on the priority issues in the American city, and
- To challenge them to develop plans and programs equal to the potential and purpose of the American city of tomorrow.

ACTION's seminar committee chairman Thomas R. Reid said participants will be 25 senior executives selected from more than 200 national and regional corporations. Mr. Reid is director of civic affairs of the Ford Motor Company and a member of ACTION's board of directors.

The business leaders will study the changing aspects of the nation's cities through on-the-site analysis in four cities, starting in Newark, New Jersey. There they will take part in the May 4-6 conference on the American City to be sponsored by ACTION and the Newark Economic Development Committee.

In that, and each subsequent city visited, participants will be involved in first-hand experiences of observation and an-

alysis. National specialists in urban renewal, city planning, economics and government will join with local leaders in serving as faculty for the seminar.

Seminar Cities

Four American cities will be the classroom for the ACTION Executives' Seminar:

Newark, New Jersey, where the theme will be City in Transition.

Baltimore, Maryland, where the Charles Center Project will be analyzed.

Detroit, Michigan, where comprehensive city and regional planning and cooperation will be examined.

New Haven, Connecticut, where emphasis will be placed on the dramatic redevelopment program now under way.

The project is financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation which covers organization, administration and other seminar expenses. Participants will finance their travel, meal and hotel costs. For further information, write to ACTION vice president Leo Molinaro at 2 West 46th Street, New York.

Rehabilitation Work is Furthered by Strong Resident Leadership in Cleveland Neighborhood

Cleveland, Ohio—More than two-thirds of planned rehabilitation work in the Garden Valley neighborhood has been accomplished in a campaign marked by strong leadership by neighborhood people.

According to Henry E. Price, administrator of rehabilitation and conservation for the city, the Block and Neighborhood Organization's efforts have been highly successful in convincing resident-owners of their legal responsibilities and advising them of helps available.

Emmett Freeman, an official in the local butchers' union, is president of the block organization which is credited with creating a "wonderful an atmosphere of community spirit" that nearby neighborhoods are asking to become affiliated. The efforts of the group to keep alive a spirit of neighborhood drive is especially noteworthy in view of the hardships on residents entailed in demolition and redevelopment surrounding and intermingled with the rehabilitation blocks.

Some \$260,000 has been spent thus far on rehabilitated structures in Garden Valley—26 properties have been completely rehabilitated and 107 are now being repaired. Applications for FHA financing are pending on 29 properties.

A Bank Committee made up of representatives of leading institutions and the FHA has given 100 per cent cooperation in analyzing and processing applications for loans.

Mr. Price said that efforts are made to get "spot cleared" lots back into residential use. The department tries to interest builders in building one- and two-family structures under Sections 220 and 221 of the National Housing Act.

The clean-up of the neighborhood resulted in the razing of old garages, barns, tool houses and tearing down old porches and fences and removing junk.

Throughout the campaign it has not been necessary for the city to take legal action against a single owner. One owner who declined to remove three illegal units from his sub-standard building sold to a new owner (fully appraised on the building's status). This owner started a broad scale rehabilitation job and has agreed to

reduce the rents from \$90 a month to about \$60.

For more information, write to Mr. Price, department of urban renewal and housing, City Hall, Cleveland.

Rehabilitation means financial gain to city treasuries, according to figures sent to ACTION by a number of cities. Examples:

Miami, Florida—Stepped-up code enforcement several years back resulted in rehabilitation construction amounting to \$10.4 million. The building, electrical and plumbing permits collected by the city on this work amounted to more than \$51,000. This more than paid for the entire budget of the Slum Rehabilitation and Prevention Department and does not include increased tax revenue.

New Orleans, Louisiana—A concentrated program of code enforcement in 1954 required an additional \$100,000 budget. But the return to the city amounted to some \$30,000 in sales taxes, \$21,000 in permit fees and \$84,825 in new real estate taxes. Net "profit": \$35,825.

And Murfreesboro, Tennessee, expects an intensive campaign to rehabilitate shum buildings to raise the annual tax revenue from the shum areas from its present \$2,000 to \$20,000.

Harvard, MIT Have Joint Urban Studies Center

Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have established a joint Center for Urban Studies which will be headed by ACTION vice president Martin Meyerson.

Mr. Meyerson was director of the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard and served as staff director of ACTION's three-year research project in Housing and Community Development.

The new Center will be international in scope and is intended to provide a stimulating environment for scholars engaged in urban research. The main emphasis will be on basic research. The secondary objective will be bridging fundamental research and policy application at local, national and international levels.

A grant of \$675,000 from the Ford Foundation provides the initial financing.

The offices and facilities of the Center are at 66 Church Street, Cambridge 38, Massachusetts.

New Zoning Law Would Inspire More Open Spaces

New York, New York—This city, the first in the nation to adopt a zoning code, is now considering a new zoning proposal which buses the city's future growth patterns on a simplified map.

In formulating the proposed code, the City Planning Commission has attempted to accomplish two main goals:

- Define the city's areas so that its present population of nearly 8,000,000 can live in neighborhoods fit for living; work in commercial centers unhindered by needless obstructions and enjoy recreation in suitable areas, and

- Control the bulk of buildings in all categories so that, as the city grows, it will not strangle itself through lack of light and air.

As their tool to achieve better planning, the planners would replace the three-map system and consolidate all its functions on a single master map correlated with new formulas and reference charts.

One of the proposal's central features is its provision to regulate resident density. It introduces for all buildings—existing ones as well as new ones—a ratio between the number of families and the lot area.

According to Lawrence M. Otton, a member of the Planning Commission, this is a provision new in New York City. "The ratio," he said, "would vary throughout the city and would, of course, be a protection against excessive conversion. It would not abolish conversions but would influence the number of apartments or rooms into which the old building could be divided."

Public hearings on the proposal are set in all of the city's five boroughs during April and May.

For more information, write to the Secretary, New York City Planning Commission, 2 Lafayette Street, New York.

Still Time For Small Towns To Participate In 1960 Housing Census

Small cities (pop. 2,500-50,000) can still get in on the 1960 Census program for housing statistics by blocks. The Bureau of Census has extended the deadline to May 1 for a written request for the program, and May 15 for signing the contract.

The service has been called one of the most valuable and inexpensive ways for communities to get a good, penetrating look at their housing problems. Write, for further information, to Wayne F. Dougherty, chief, housing division, Bureau of Census, Washington 25, D.C.

CONFERENCE—from page 2

The theme of the session will be: The American City: A Call for Statesmanship.

The Wednesday morning session, May 6, will be devoted to: "An Agenda for Local Action—The ACTION Program for the American City." This will include a visual presentation of the elements of an effective local program. Civic and governmental leaders from across the nation will join the conference with on-the-scene reports and comments by means of telephone interviews.

Operation Land Sale



Erie, Pennsylvania, which now has a new citizens' organization to back up the city's urban renewal program — the Citizens' Action Committee — showed this display to builders at the second annual Urban Renewal Project Exchange in Washington, part of ACTION's February Building Industry Congress. Local renewal officials, private homebuilders and commercial developers and investors came from 72 cities in 27 states to take part. Shown here, Thomas C. Hoffman, executive director of Erie's Renewal Authority, points out the location of available land to a builder who is not shown.

City Approves Citizen Association's Ordinance Upgrading Neighborhood

Baltimore, Maryland—The Mayor and City Council here have approved an ordinance introduced by a citizens' group working to upgrade a neighborhood of some 816 acres. The group believes the ordinance will help, since it changes the neighborhood's classification to provide for only six families per acre, instead of 16.

Emmanuel Gorfine, president of the Mt. Washington Improvement Association, Inc., reports that his group introduced the ordinance to preserve and improve the character of the area.

It based its argument on a land use survey which it had conducted in November, 1956, and the findings of a zoning expert whom it hired. The ordinance, together with supporting plans and necessary data, was introduced in the City Council.

The effort was financed by assessment of association members, for a total cost of \$2,500. "Since the total assessed valuation of the area covered by the ordinance is in the neighborhood of \$13,000,000," said Mr. Gorfine, "this was a modest investment indeed."

For more information, write to Mr. Gorfine at 215 North Calvert Street, Baltimore.

City's First Section 221 Sale House Now A Home

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—A 40-year-old house started a new life last month as this city's first residence rehabilitated for sale under Section 221 of the National Housing Act. The pilot rehabilitation job was sponsored by ACTION-Housing Inc., along with ten other local organizations.

Launched last September, the project tested the economic feasibility of rehabilitation, established the necessary procedures and stimulated interest in home rejuvenation.

Two Pittsburgh realtors, both members of the Build America Better Committee of the Greater Pittsburgh Board of Realtors, were approached by ACTION-Housing Inc., and proved willing to buy the old house and pool their experience in its rehabilitation.

Under the 221 provision, the Pittsburgh Insuring office of the FHIA issued a 100 per cent mortgage insurance commitment to Mr. and Mrs. Norman W. Biggs, the buyers. They bought the house for \$10,000, with no down payment—the 100 per cent mortgage is for 20 years.

Section 221 is designed to provide housing for families displaced by urban renewal activities, highway or school construction, code enforcement or other public works programs.

Organizes Council

ACTION-Housing Inc., is now helping to organize and sustain citizens' councils in designated urban renewal areas in Allegheny County. First of these is the East Liberty Citizens' Renewal Council, whose area is Pittsburgh's first neighborhood renewal project, comprising 250 acres. One-third of the area's buildings will be demolished and the rest rehabilitated.

For more information, write to Bernard E. Lushbough, executive director, ACTION-Housing Inc., No. 1 Gateway Center, Pittsburgh 22.

A magazine writer asked 100 middle- and upper-income level couples in two New York City suburbs what they would do if their incomes were greater.

There was the usual sprinkling of yearnings for tennis courts, milk cows, trips around the world.

"Mostly, though," reports the writer, "families seem to have more modest wants. The goals most often mentioned—and by a wide margin—are a new home or improvements in the present home."

(*'How Much Money Do You Want?'* by Jonathan Clark, appearing in the New York Herald Tribune, February 15.)

Exhibit At Congress



Sacramento, California, was one of 23 cities which set up exhibits at the Urban Renewal Project Exchange to show parcels of land available for redevelopment. Jerome F. Lipp of the Redevelopment Agency is shown. At the Building Industry Congress, Richard L. Steiner, Commissioner of the Urban Renewal Administration, told delegates that 1959 is the year "in which urban renewal will swing away from limited housing objectives to the broader goal of city rebuilding and modernization."

Daily Newspapers Send Newsmen To ACTION Renewal-Writing Seminar

ACTION officials and national urban renewal experts met the press April 2-3 at a Seminar designed to help newsmen do a better job of straight and interpretive urban renewal reporting.

Reporters from major metropolitan daily newspapers gathered at the Princeton Inn, Princeton, New Jersey, for the meeting which was a prelude to the upcoming May 4-6 ACTION Newark Conference on The American City.

Some of the faculty for the Seminar were working newspapermen who have had practical experience in covering urban renewal stories.

Newspapers sending representatives (as of March 27) include Akron Beacon Journal, Cincinnati Inquirer, Houston Post, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Christian Science Monitor, Chicago Tribune, New Haven Register, Boston Globe, Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, Cincinnati Post and Times-Star, Richmond Times-Dispatch, New York Times, Dayton Daily News, Louisville Courier-Journal and Newark Evening News.

A three-part series on the growing commuter problem in the New York area and other major cities was carried in The New York Times, March 8-10. It discussed Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Chicago. Copies may be ordered from the back-numbers department, Times, 229 West 43rd Street.

Reading For Renewal

The Community Planning Association of Canada has published a pamphlet, "Urban Renewal," which describes urban renewal as it is in Canada today.

The Association seeks to be a forum in which the problems of Canadian renewal can be discussed and it endorses the establishment of citizens' organizations to help and support city officials working for renewal.

The pamphlet contains excerpts from the National Housing Act, 1954, and points out that this act makes no provision for financial assistance to municipalities carrying out rehabilitation or conservation schemes.

(Available from the Community Planning Association of Canada, 77 MacLaren Street, Ottawa 4.)

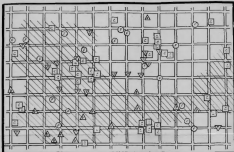
Two small pamphlets which could be of help to groups working on neighborhood rehabilitation projects can be had from the Federal Housing Administration.

Both explain the workings of FHA-insured loans. "Improve Today With FHA," is a four-page brochure which includes a table showing the cost of Title I loans to the borrower.

"Remodel, Repair, Repay with FHA" is a 14-page pamphlet with detailed information on the kinds of repairs which can be financed with an FHA-insured loan, features of the loan, who can borrow, purposes and terms and procedures to follow.

(Both available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. The small

Albuquerque Map Shows The High Cost of Slums



The high cost of slums in terms of major crimes, tuberculosis, fire calls, juvenile delinquency and communicable diseases is shown in this map produced by the Albuquerque, New Mexico, City Health Department. The map appears in a brochure, "Albuquerque Fights Blight," which makes an appeal for individual, neighborhood and community efforts to

prevent neighborhood decay. The key box—major crimes; triangle with T—tuberculosis; circle—fire calls; triangle with D—Communicable diseases; shaded areas—juvenile delinquency. For more information, write to Dr. Larry J. Gordon, director, health department, City of Albuquerque.

brochure is 5¢ per copy, \$2.00 per hundred; the 14-page booklet costs 10¢ per single copy, with a 25 per cent discount on orders of 100 or more.)

"Home Maintenance Does Not Increase Year Taxes" is the title and the point of a neighborhood conservation information bulletin prepared by the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in cooperation with its Board of Assessors.

It points out that many normal main-

tenance and repair jobs—and it lists them—may be done without increasing the tax. Also listed are improvements which could bring a higher assessment. "Many neighbors," the booklet points out, "may be putting off needed repairs and maintenance because they fear assessment increases." The material was inspired by a Detroit City Plan Commission pamphlet.

(Available from John E. Connolly, director, Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, 57 Inman Street, Cambridge.)

ACTION

American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods

Box 462, Radio City Station, New York 20, N. Y.

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 13648
New York, N.Y.

Mr. Stanley B. Winters
25 Shanley Ave.
Newark 9, N. J.

D